

# FACADE

SOME time ago James Robertson suggested that the NZBS should perform *Facade*. Then Keith Falkner, the English baritone, arrived in New Zealand, and in *King David* showed his outstanding ability at narrative to combine with music. He had appeared in *Facade* in England and liked it; now he would read the poems here. Listeners to the YCs on Sunday, March 3, will hear this performance, with Keith Falkner as reciter, James Hopkinson (flute and piccolo), Frank Gurr (clarinet), Patrick Watters (bass clarinet), Robert Girvan (alto saxophone), Gordon Webb (trumpet), Norman Gadd (percussion), and Farquhar Wilkinson and Basil Charles (cellos), under the direction of James Robertson.

*Facade*, "an entertainment, with poems by Edith Sitwell and music by William Walton," was a considerable sensation at the time of its first public performance, in 1923. The verses, "abstract patterns in sound," as Miss Sitwell described them, were spoken through a megaphone from behind a painted screen, which also concealed the seven instrumentalists, to deprive the work of any personal quality.

This impersonal quality was necessary, as the work is a satire on the popular music of the early twenties. The verses are designed for recitation, and

are scored for timing, to fit in perfectly with the rhythms of the music. Indeed, the work was written in the closest collaboration, while Walton was staying with the Sitwells. Most of us know the words and music as separate entities, but each gains immensely from being heard with the other. Mr. Ernest Newman, in the *Sunday Times*, said of one performance: "If I have missed, in my study, the inner meaning of some of Miss Sitwell's ingeniously-wrought verses, it was because in my innocence I read them as I would read ordinary poetry. These are saxophone tunes, not violin melodies. There are all sorts of queer delightful rhythms and cross rhythms and unexpected stabbing accents."

The isolated words that look rather strange on the printed page now take their proper emphasis in the recitation. Walton, in writing the music for this verse, has parodied the spiky rhythms and swooning melodies of contemporary dance music. In *Facade* he first made a name for a humorous musical talent in "guying things that have a natural touch of absurdity about them." This frivolous and sophisticated music with its mock sentimentality was immediately suitable for ballet, and Walton later adapted it for a full orchestra in suites both for ballet and concert performances.

## Theatre of Music

Other NZBS productions to be heard in the near future are repeat broadcasts of three musical programmes in *Theatre*



EDITH SITWELL



WILLIAM WALTON

of Music. The first, on Saturday, March 2, is *Dear Clara*. In this life story of Dame Clara Butt, Beatrice Jones, of Auckland, sings many songs that the English contralto made famous in her brilliant career. On March 23 listeners will hear *The Dark-eyed Sailor*, a ballad opera specially written for the BBC by Francis Dillon, using sea-shanties of the Napoleonic era. Francis Collinson arranged this music, which in Wellington

was conducted by Alex Lindsay. The cast of well-known singers and actors is led by Thomas Hanna, Ian McNeill, age, Robin Gordon, Roy Leywood, William Austin, and Allan Jervis. *Blossom-time* will be heard on April 6. This musical play is based on the life of Franz Schubert, as told in the film by Sidney Box. The music is directed by Harry Brusey, and this programme, like the others, was produced by Bernard Beeby.

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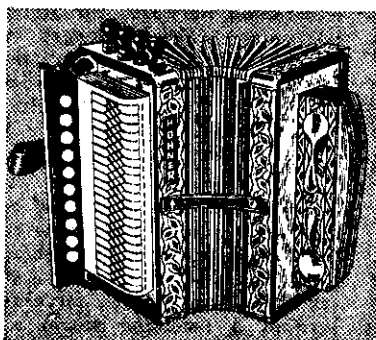


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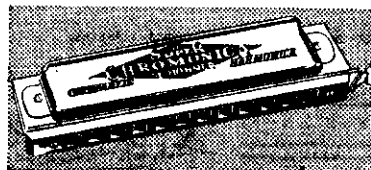
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